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Address

at the Reception

given by

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild

to

The Countess of Aberdeen

and the

Delegates to the International

Council of Women

[by Mrs James H. Peck]

Art Gallery

Montreal, June 14, 1909

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BIBLIOTHÈQUE
SAINT-SULPICE

Address

By MRS. JAMES H. PECK
President of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild

Madam President, Ladies of the International Council, Ladies and Gentlemen:—

It is my privilege this evening to extend to our guests a hearty welcome, and to express to them our pleasure in seeing them here to-night, and in meeting women, every one of whom is working in some way for the benefit of mankind.

That we should have with us on this occasion the ...s of Aberdeen, whose beneficent influence has ...t far and wide, is a particular pleasure, because she ... formerly Patroness of the Society from which The Canadian Handicrafts Guild eventually developed, and by her encouragement and frequent visits to our Studio helped forward the work which has continued to feel the inspiration given by her in its early days.

The members of the Guild desire to express their sympathy with the aims of the International Council and to assure you that they will follow the proceedings in Toronto with much interest.

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It would have been a satisfaction to receive you at our own rooms, but unfortunately the dimensions are too modest to allow of that, and the Art Association, which has many times in the past furthered our aims by its friendly consideration, has once more solved our difficulty, and we are able to welcome you in these beautiful galleries, a pleasure which we gratefully acknowledge.

The Local Council has suggested that I should say a few words about the foundation of the movement to revive and promote Canadian handicrafts, as this may be of interest to you.

I must go back to the year 1894, when I was president of the then newly established Montreal Branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada, a society founded some time before in Toronto.

During my presidency we came to the conclusion that in Toronto, there being then no art society, there was ample room for such a body as the Women's Art Association, which certainly deserves commendation for the excellent work accomplished during many years.

In Montreal, however, where an established Art Association was already making good progress in training the artistic taste of the town, holding classes and giving frequent exhibitions—which policy is partly responsible for the many fine private collections owned here—we soon felt that our work could only overlap that already being well done, and that there was not the same *raison d'être* for our existence as in the Queen City. There was, however,

other work for us, th giving of art lectures, and the encouragement of the minor arts, which at that time were not receiving the attention that is being accorded to them to-day.

Gradually an idea took form in the minds of a few of us, that of making some more definite effort to promote handicrafts in Canada, more particularly in isolated districts where we knew of existing crafts that were rapidly dying out for lack of appreciation.

In 1900 it was determined to propound this scheme, and in due time it was laid before the committee of the Montreal Branch of The Women's Art Association of which, by that time, Miss Phillips had taken the Presidency.

It was not without some difficulty that sufficient enthusiasm was aroused to make the committee undertake the risk nd the arduous work in connection with the scheme p posed, but finally it was decided to hold a large exhibition of handicrafts, not necessarily all Canadian. This was carried out successfully. Not only did it arouse the enthusiastic interest of all who saw it, but it left us with a sum of money to continue the work.

In 1902 a second exhibition was planned, this time purely Canadian, and to the surprise of Montreal, a rather remarkable display was the result, which made many realise the advantages, to the whole country, of the handicraft movement.

This exhibition I consider as the real, solid founda-

tion of the handicrafts. Immediately at its close the committee decided to open Our Handicrafts Shop, which since that time has always kept its doors open to craftsmen and women from every province of the Dominion.

We have constantly heard that the promotion of the cottage industries originated elsewhere than in Montreal, and at a very much earlier date. About this we do not know, but from 1902 for some years Our Handicrafts Shop in Montreal supplied every exhibition that was sent out throughout the Dominion, and elsewhere, and with the exception of a loan of $200 (which was repaid in 1904) we bore the entire expense of such supply, sometimes having exhibitions out to the value of several thousand dollars at one time, exhibits which often came back damaged, thereby causing us considerable loss.

During the three following seasons 32 exhibitions were sent from our little shop, twelve of these being arranged by the Women's Art Association in Toronto, and the rest by the sub-committee of the Montreal Branch.

Everything went well until the close of 1904 when it was discovered that, owing to the rapid development of the movement, the charter of the Women's Art Association of Canada had been outgrown, and the Montreal Branch decided that the time had come to seek a new and separate charter for the Handicrafts, so as to allow every chance of growth to this its second offshoot, (the first being, during my presidency, The Women's Branch of the Antiquarian Society.)

In 1905 the new charter was obtained, and since that date the Canadian Handicrafts Guild has flourished, always retaining the friendly interest of the Montreal Branch of the Women's Art Association, which, by-the-way, has itself deserted the parent stem, and is now The Women's Art Society of Montreal.

Since 1905 seventy-three exhibitions have gone out from the guild; several to England (one is at the International Exhibition in London now), one to Ireland, others all over Canada, the United States (where we have two exhibitions at the present time), and one, at the request of Her Excellency the Countess Grey, even found its way to Australia. It was a great pleasure to send off this exhibit to Australia, though I must frankly admit that it was a strain on our resources to pay for the necessary $1,200 worth of stock, but being a strongly imperialistic guild, we were glad to feel that even in our humble way we might add one little link to the chain that binds the empire together. Sales of thousands of dollars have been made for craftsmen who are not in a position to sell well for themselves. One little village has an established hand-made carpet industry; one district in the Far West and two in the East have "developed industries", i.e., they can now sell for themselves, with little help from the Guild. New crafts are coming to light, old ones are being revived, sometimes to the surprise of workers who had lost pride in their skill. New districts are opening up—thousand of miles apart, and containing inhabitants of many nationalities. Here I might draw attention to the

great difference between the work of our guild and that of similar associations in Great Britain and Europe. There, a Society deals with people of one language, with, for the most part, one religion, and with established standards, ideals, and conditions, and within an area measured by hundreds of miles. Here we must deal with peoples of many tongues, and many religions, with different standards and ideals, with conditions that change constantly, and over an area covering thousands and thousands of miles. Already we draw work from almost every Province, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, the Labrador (where we co-operate with Dr. Grenfell's mission), Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Hay River in the far middle north, where a mission nurse is our agent, and we have even had a few articles from the Yukon. The movement is growing daily and with its growth is fixing the appreciation of its true value to the Dominion.

When we think of the things that have left their mark in the world we realise that hand-work has another value besides the betterment of the mental, moral, physical condition, and enriching of one generation of workers, valuable as all these things are.

Let me accentuate this thought by a few questions.

Who added to the beauty of the great buildings of Europe? Its craftsmen.

Who hung the walls with wonderful tapestries? Its craftsmen.

Who adds to the glory of India, China and Japan? Their craftsmen.

Whose rugs are prized the world over? Those of the craftsmen of Turkey, Persia, India and now even Ireland, for within the last few years, owing to the introduction of this craft, Donegal has leaped into this field of art.

The metal-worker, the weaver, the embroiderer, etc., each and all have made different countries famous. Why, the words Ireland and Lace suggest each other, especially since the great impetus given by Her Excellency the Countess of Aberdeen, to this beautiful art. Shall not Canada, then, cherish her handicrafts? One or two features of our work I must not omit to mention. The first is the giving of prizes, which is, we find, one of our surest ways of improving the standard of work. We have many times offered prizes to our workers, and in the near future we are to hold another competition. Formerly the prizes were offered by the Guild itself, but this time, through the generosity of some of our well-wishers, our prize-list will assume much more important proportions than hitherto. When complete it will be sent to all the Provincial Exhibitions and County Fairs throughout the Dominion. It will prove of considerable value not merely to the workers, but also to establish the position of each province as regards manual art, to show in what places help may be necessary to develop latent skill, where there is special or inherited knowledge to work on, and in many ways to point out the possibilities of development along these lines to the advantage of the Dominion.

(A list of the proposed prizes is appended, in the hope that those who wish to help the cause may do so by offering the remaining prizes in time to send the list to the Provinces before the annual fairs.)

A second and very important feature is sending judges of hand work to county fairs where the country people exhibit their work. We have already tried this experiment with considerable success, and hope to extend our sphere of usefulness in this direction. On each occasion where we have sent a judge, the committee of the exhibition has expressed its appreciation of our assistance, and has invited our co-operation again. An examination of the list of exhibitions sent out by the Guild will show how often our selected hand-work has been sent as an object lesson to such exhibitions and fairs and it will be easy to realize why the expenses of the Guild are heavy, and why we are grateful for voluntary assistance.

A third feature is one that has been successful in every country, and is indeed a primary necessity. I refer to the sending of teachers to the workers. This we have only been able to do in three cases, as we have had none but volunteer teachers, the expense of sending paid teachers to such widely distant parts of the Dominion being quite beyond the resources of the Guild. It is needless to explain that the usefulness of the Guild would be more than doubled if this part of the work could be properly carried out.

In Norway and Sweden where the handicrafts have

been highly valued for many years, such associations as ours are subsidized by the government. This is not yet the case in Canada. So far our entire work has been carried on by voluntary workers, with the exception of the manager of Our Handicrafts Shop and her assistant, and during the last year we have been obliged, owing to the increase of correspondence, to secure the services of a secretary.

Before closing I would like to read a couple of extracts from addresses lately made before the Canadian Club by men of wide experience; they both point out the value of the handicrafts, and from different points of view.

The first extracts are from a speach by Prof. Robertson of Macdonald College. He said :—"The way to increase the wealth of the nation is to apply intelligent labour to its resources. . . The best industrial education does not deal with machinery, but with the individual, so as to give him useful and usable knowledge. . . The public can gain a greater intelligence by actually doing things".

The second extract is from Mr. Merrit's address, and is as follows :—

"During the past few years the advance of labour-saving machinery has decreased the demand for muscular endeavour no less than 70%, while increasing the drain upon the nervous system. All the important vital functions, breathing, digestion, circulation, etc. are carried on by muscular effort, which power is being constantly minimized by labour-saving inventions. Work is the first law of

nature and the man who neglects bodily labour of some sort must in the end suffer the consequence. It is disregard of this rule that is spreading consumption".

Here we have two opinions, both valuable. One points out the advantage of hand-work as a promotor of greater intelligence and greater wealth. The other points out the absolute necessity for manual labour as a promoter of health.

Virtue is *energy* flowing in the right direction. Vice is *energy* flowing in the wrong direction. Both are just energy that must find some outlet. Congenial labour with the hands, the fashioning of fair things, has been proved to be an immense help in causing energy to become virtue. The handicrafts in their manifold diversity supply congenial labour for almost every order of mind, and are a safety valve that should be cherished and protected as of paramount value to our country.

In closing, let me once more wish our guests, for myself and for the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, every success in the important meetings that are before them.

Proposed Prize List.

FIRST PRIZE $5 SECOND PRIZE $2.

Subject to wishes of Donors.

Weaving.

Prizes and Expenses amounting to $100, given by J. Todd, Esq., M.D., of Macdonald College.

1. Coloured linen, plain weave
2. White " damask
3. Coloured " "
4. Fancy weaving in wool, cotton, or linen
5. Doubleface weaving, in wool, cotton or linen
6. Couvrepieds or curtains, with patterns.
7. Homespun, for men's clothing
8. " " women's "
9. Collection of patterns

Lace.

1. Pillow lace
2. Needle point
3. Crochet
4. Irish crochet
5. Lace with machine made braid
6. Miscellaneous kinds
7. Knitted lace

Embroidery.

Prizes amounting to $50 given by Sir Thomas Shaughnessy, Montreal.

1. Ecclesiastical
2. On white material
3. Coloured on linen
4. On hand woven linen
5. Indian on leather
6. " " cloth
7. Indian on Bark

Leatherwork.

Prizes amounting to $25 given by Sir Daniel McMillan, Lieut.-Gov. of Manitoba.

1. Tooled
2. Repoussee
3. Lacquered.

Rugs.

1. Hooked, wool
2. Hooked, rags
3. Knotted
4. Braided

Carving.

1. Wood
2. Stone
3. Miscellaneous

Basketry.

1. Rush
2. Willow
3. Splint
4. Grass
5. Roots
6. Cedar
7. Raffia
8. Bark
9. Nest of 6 baskets
10. Miscellaneous, and Indian Mats

Metal Work.

1. Wrought iron
2. Repoussee
3. Hammered
4. Etched
5. Flamenee
6. Ornaments with enamel
7. " inlaid
8. Silver ornaments, made by B.C. Indians.

Bookbinding.

1. Hand bound book, tooled.
2. Hand bound book.

Stencils.

5 prizes suggested.

Sewing.

1. Garment showing stitching, hemming, button-holing, feather stitching, felling and gathering.
2. Child's frock trimmed.
3. Towel embroidered on hand-woven linen.

Prizes given by Lady Hingston.

4. Towel, fine-drawn, hand-woven linen.

Prizes given by Mrs. George Benson.

Knitting.

1. Socks 2. Mittens 3. Fancy Knitting 4 White quilt

Pottery, &c.

Besides competing for prizes, articles will be placed on sale if desired.

List of Exhibitions

Sent out by our Handicrafts Shop from 1902 to 1909.

1902—

Montral Branch W.A.A.C.
Little Metis
(Result, Tadousac.)
Sherbrooke Eastern Townships Exhibition
London Fair, Ont.
Toronto National Council

1903—

Women's Institute, London, England
New Bond Street Society of Artists, London, England
Little Metis
Gananoque
Toronto Fair
Toronto W.A.A.C.
Ottawa, W.A.A.C.
Winnipeg W.A.A.C.
Desbarats, Ont.

1904—

Toronto W.A.A.C.
Halifax, N.S.
St. Louis Fair, U.S.
Halifax Fair
Sherbrooke Eastern Townships Exhibition
New Glasgow Fair
Debarats, Ont.
Peterboro' Fair
Toronto "
Winnipeg W.A.A.C.
Brockville (made in Canada Charity Fair)
Toronto W.A.A.C.
Arts and Crafts Society, Toronto
Berlin—Germany

1905—

Handicrafts Exhibition, Art Gallery, Montreal
Atlantic City, U.S.
Home Arts and Industries, London, England
Lady Bruce, London, England
Desbarats, Ont.
Lady Allan, Cacouna, P.Q.
North Hatley, P.Q.
Morrisburg Fair, Ont.
London Fair, Ont.
Sherbrooke Fair, P.Q.
Ottawa, Ont.
Halifax, N.S.
Winchester Fair, Ont.

Goderich Fair, Ont.
Prescott Fair, Ont.
Paris Fair, Ont.
Collingwood Fair, Ont.
Renfrew Fair, Ont.
Bowmanville Fair, Ont.
Made in Canada Exhibition, Ottawa, Ont.
St. John, N. B.
Arts and Crafts, Toronto, Ont.
Xmas Bazaar, Cornwall, Ont.

1906—

London, Eng.
Handicrafts Exhibition, Ottawa, Ont.
Norwich, Conn. U.S.
Chatham, Ont.
Niagara Falls, Ont.
Boston Arts and Crafts, Boston, U.S.
St. Catherines, Ont.
Metis, P.Q.
Gananoque, Ont.
North Hatley, P.Q.
St. John, N.B.
Sherbrooke, P.Q.
Winchester, Ont.
St. Hyacinthe, P.Q.
Huntingdon, Div. A. Ont.
" Div. B., Ont.
Prescott, Ont.
St. Louis de Gonzague, P.Q.
Richmond P. Q.
Halifax, N. S.
Renfrew, Ont.
Goderich, Ont.
Brantford, Ont.

1907—

Handicrafts Exhibition, Art Gallery, Montreal.
Hervey Institute Bazaar, Montreal
Dublin, Irish International Exhibition
Society Applied Arts, Toronto, Ont.
Metis, P.Q.
Australian Exhibition of Women's Work, Melbourne.
Banff, Alta.
North Hatley, P.Q.
Sherbrooke, P.Q., Eastern Townships Exhibition
Lachute Fair, P.Q.
Kingston, Ont.
Ottawa, Ont.
Boston Arts and Crafts, Boston, U. S.

1908—

Lyric Hall Shop sale, Montreal.
Franco-British Exhibition, London, Eng.
Marchioness of Donegall, London, Eng.
Quebec, during Tercentenary
Chester, N.S.
Society Applied Arts, Toronto, Ont.
Hamilton, Ont.
North Hatley, P.Q.
Messrs. Waring & Gillow, London, Eng.

1909—

International Exhibition, London, Eng.
Boston Arts and Crafts, Boston, U.S.
2 at Woodstock Inn, Vert., U.S.
Lyric Hall shop sale, Montreal
Hamilton, Ont.